

NOTES ON THE GENUS *FICUS* (TOURN.), LINN.

By JOSEPH BURTT-DAVY, F.L.S., F.R.S.S.Af., F.R.G.S.

(With Plates XII., XIII.)

(Read October 18, 1911.)

In the *Kew Bulletin* for 1908 (No. 4, p. 165) I discussed the relationship of the Wonderboom, as the result of studies in the herbaria of Kew and Zurich. At that time I was unable to arrive at any definite conclusion, but subsequent study of the tree at different seasons and under varying conditions shows clearly that it is a distinct species, for which I propose the name of *Ficus Pretoriae*.

Ficus Pretoriae, Burtt-Davy, sp. nov.—Arbor majuscula, umbrosa, ad 60 ped. alt., ramis patentibus in comam latiusculam expansis, ramulis glabris, cortice fusco, foliis persistentibus, petiolatis, ellipticis vel oblongis, coriaceis, glabris, integerrimis, apice obtusis vel acutis, basi truncatis vel rotundatis vel vix sub-cordatis, petiolis eglandulosis 1–1½ poll. long., receptaculis tribus in axillis, densis, sub-globosis, glabris, verrucosis, 3 lin. diam. Gemma terminali longe acuminata, glabra. *F. salicifolia* Vahl var *australis* Warb. non *F. australis*, Willd.

Spreading, umbrageous, evergreen tree, up to 60 feet high; branchlets glabrous, reddish. *Leaves* coriaceous, bluish-green, entire, glabrous, 3–5 in. long, 1¼–2¼ in. wide, oblong or elliptic, acute or obtuse, rounded to cuneate at base (not, or scarcely, cordate); marginal vein conspicuous on both sides, remote from the margin; petioles slender, 1½ in. long, glabrous; stipules long-acuminate, ½ in. long, glabrous. *Receptacles* in threes, axillary, arranged along the whole length of the branchlet, globose, about 3 lines diameter, pale green, becoming whitish when ripe, glabrous, spotted with whitish pustules, sessile or very shortly pedunculate.

Transvaal. Magaliesberg at the Wonderboom-poort, Burtt-Davy, 2806, 2645, 2750, &c.; known locally as the Wonderboom.

The Pretoria "Wonderboom" was illustrated from photographs in the *Transvaal Agricultural Journal*, vol. iv., plates 3, 4, and 5, October, 1905,

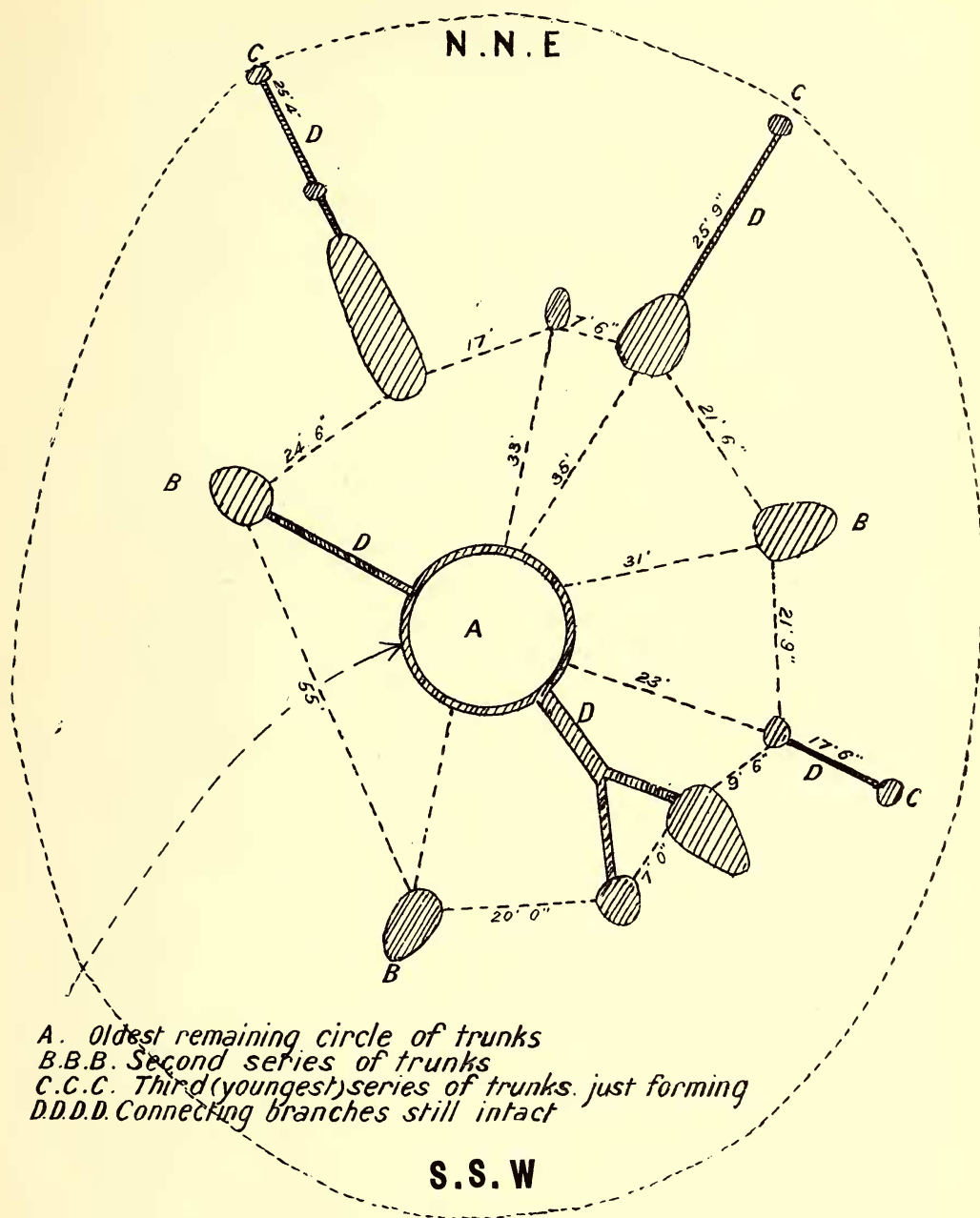
and in the same publication Mr. Harold W. F. Wager, F.R.S., F.L.S., gave the following interesting account of it:—

“The ‘Wonderboom’ is a remarkable tree. It forms a large hemi-



Ficus Pretoriae Burt-Davy.

spherical mass covered with evergreen leaves and small figs. Its diameter from NNE. to SSW. is $162\frac{1}{2}$ feet, and from E. to W. $141\frac{1}{2}$ feet. Its height, as estimated by means of triangles of Kaffir whips, was 67 feet.



DIAGRAMMATIC PLAN OF WONDERBOOM. SHOWING POSITION OF NEW GROWTHS.

"The tree spreads in a peculiar manner. Some of the branches from the centre spread out laterally in a radial direction and gradually droop towards the ground. At a distance of about 30 feet they come into contact with it and send out roots from which new groups of stems arise. From these other branches may be given off, still in the same radial direction, and these coming in contact with the ground may become rooted, in their turn, and send up a third group of stems.

"From measurements made on the spot we found an inner ring of nine groups of stems surrounding the main central mass, three of them still connected to it by their drooping branches. The circumference of the central mass of stem is 81 feet, and the second group forms approximately a circle at an average distance of about 30 feet. Beyond the ring there were three other groups at a distance of about 25 feet from the outside of the ring still connected by the branches from which they had originated."

While recently working over some South African material of the genus *Ficus*, I have been able to identify from the descriptions and illustrations some of Mr. T. R. Sim's Portuguese East African species with species which occur in extra-tropical South Africa. The following species are described and figured in the "Forest Flora and Forest Resources of Portuguese East Africa," by T. R. Sim, F.L.S.; Aberdeen, 1909:—

F. howardiana, Sim, occurs sparingly in Swaziland, and at Nelspruit, Transvaal. It is No. 176 of my list of *Native Trees of the Transvaal*.

F. picta, Sim, agrees well with *F. soldanella*, Warb., a species found in similar situations along the Magaliesberg.

F. montana, Sim, is *F. Sonderi*, Miq., also met with in Natal (Camperdown) and Bechuanaland.

F. umbrosa, Sim, resembles in its remarkable foliage a species which grows sparingly on the Berea at Durban, but which differs in some particulars from Mr. Sim's description, as pointed out to me by Miss Franks, who has been watching the tree during the present season, and has recently been able to obtain fruiting material; it may prove to be a distinct species, but further investigation is needed.

F. utilis, Sim, appears to be the tree which was formerly planted so extensively as a street tree in the lower parts of Durban, but whether indigenous to Natal or introduced from farther north, no one seems to know.